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THE FRANKFORT RABBINICAL CONFERENCE : 1845 ¹.

THE second meeting of the "Conference of the Rabbis of Germany²" took place at Frankfort on the Main, July 15-28, 1845; those present were: A. Adler of Worms, S. Adler of Alzey, J. Auerbach of Frankfort, Ben Israel of Coblenz, David Einhorn of Birkenfeld, S. Formstecher of Offenbach, Z. Frankel of Dresden, A. Geiger of Breslau³, Gosen of Marburg, Güldenstern of Buchau, S. Herxheimer of Bernburg, L. Herzfeld of Brunswick, M. Hess of Stadt-Lengsfeld, S. Holdheim of Schwerin, S. Hirsch of Luxembourg, Hoffmann of Waldorf, J. Jolowicz of Kulm, I. M. Jost of Frankfort, J. Kahn of Trier, J. Maier of Stuttgart, L. Philippson of Magdeburg, M. Reiss of Altbreisach, G. Salomon of Hamburg, L. Schott of Randegg, J. Sobernheim of Bingen, L. Stein of Frankfort, L. Süsskind of Wiesbaden, A. Treuenfels of Weilburg, H. Wagner of Mannheim, and B. Wechsler of Oldenburg. L. Stein, the recently chosen rabbi of the Frankfort congregation was elected President;

¹ Article VI of the series on The Reform Movement in Judaism.

² Die Versammlung der Rabbiner Deutschlands; this was the official name adopted at Brunswick; see *Protokolle*, 87; this name was changed at Frankfort to Die Versammlung deutscher Rabbiner (Conference of German Rabbis).

³ Geiger wrote a series of articles which appeared just before the convening of the conference in which he set forth what he thought the conference should stand for and aim to accomplish; see "Einige Ansichten über die nächste Rabbinerversammlung," *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, IX, 322 ff., 340 ff., 386 ff., 398 ff.; the closing words of these articles express clearly his idea of the object of the conferences; "the only purpose that should be kept in mind is to strengthen the religious spirit of the present generation; all outgrown forms that have ceased to further the religious sentiment must be either abrogated or changed in accordance with the new life that the Jewish people are living now."

A. Geiger, Vice-President, and I. M. Jost and S. Hirsch, Secretaries.

The Frankfort Conference is notable because of the full and thorough discussion that the report of the Commission on Liturgy received at the hands of the rabbis present. This commission, appointed at Brunswick, reported through its chairman, J. Maier, of Stuttgart. The discussion of this report occupied the greater portion of the session; for nine days (July 15-24) the members of the conference debated the various recommendations of the report; the discussion was conducted on a very lofty and scholarly plane and in the course thereof many striking things were said; although most of the rabbis present leaned decidedly towards reform, still the conservative side was represented, and as will be seen the recommendations were by no means radical in character although of a reforming tendency throughout. The men gathered at Frankfort were for the most part open-minded and clear-sighted; they combined a thorough knowledge of Hebrew lore with a keen appreciation of the religious conditions in the Jewish communities and fearlessly yet reverentially gave themselves to the task of casting their Jewish inheritance into a modern mould¹.

The discussions on the liturgy are indicative of the spirit that permeated the conference, and must therefore be given at some length, notably as the points debated are of significance still to-day, sixty years later.

The Hebrew Language in the Service. The commission reported in answer to the question whether and in how far the Hebrew language was necessary for the public religious services, and if not necessary whether its retention was advisable for the present², that there is no objective necessity for Hebrew throughout the service, and that not

¹ For a fine statement of why the reform movement could be led successfully only by men of this type, cf. Holdheim, *Geschichte der Entstehung und Entwicklung der jüdischen Reformgemeinde in Berlin*, 40. Berlin, 1857.

² *Protokolle und Aktenstücke der Zweiten Rabbinerversammlung, abgehalten in Frankfurt am Main vom 15ten bis zum 28sten Juli 1845*, p. 18, Frankfurt am Main, 1845.

even Talmudic authority can be cited for this, barring few exceptions. But since a subjective necessity for the Hebrew possibly exists among a great portion of German Jewry at present, the commission deems it advisable to retain the Hebrew in the typical parts of the liturgy, viz.: ברכו with its responses, the פרישת שמע, the first and last three benedictions of the תפלה and the קריאת התורה; the remainder of the service to be in German¹.

Zacharias Frankel, who had criticized the Brunswick Conference so caustically², and who had appeared at this conference with the purpose of directing the discussions into a more conservative channel, and of becoming its dominating spirit, as became evident later on in his withdrawal from the conference when he could not accomplish this³, took occasion at the very outset of the meeting to define his religious standpoint and his attitude towards reform. He used here the famous phrase "positive historical Judaism" as expressive of his position. He discussed not so much the point at issue, viz.: Hebrew in the service, as the whole question of reform. It is necessary, first of all, said he, to lay down the principles that guide us. "Lack of principle (Prinzipienlosigkeit) is the greatest enemy of the faith and must be combated from all sides." He declared his platform to be positive historical Judaism. True, we cannot return to the letter of the Bible and take this as our guide, but shall we be guided on the other hand by the spirit of the age? The spirit of the age is as

¹ It is interesting to note that the first prayer book that was constructed on the lines suggested in this report was Dr. David Einhorn's; the Hebrew portions in that prayer book are the very ones suggested here; in the latest prayer book prepared by adherents of the reform movement, which is also the first to be issued by a body of rabbis and not by an individual, viz.: The Union Prayer Book published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis—the same Hebrew scheme is followed, with the exception that the last three benedictions of the תפלה are also in English.

² *J. Q. R.*, XVII, 679.

³ *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, IX, 174-6; *Israelit des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, VI, 256.

changeable as time itself. Further it is cold; it may appear reasonable but it will never be able to satisfy the heart, to comfort, soothe, and edify; Judaism, however, is always inspiring and edifying. The reform of Judaism is not a reform of the faith but of legal acts. These still exercise a living and definite influence on the people. It should not be our purpose to weaken but to strengthen this influence. We should not pay any heed to individuals who do not carry out the customs; we are not a party but must have a care for the whole community. The need of the hour is to prevent each and every division in Israel, not to call new parties into existence but to reconcile with one another those already existing. Another principle must guide us, viz.: the science of Judaism; this must be the foundation whereon every reform must build. There are great scholars who are not rabbis in active service and who are therefore excluded from our meetings; they should have a voice in such matters as require a scientific exposition of the thought and development of Judaism; it would be well, therefore, to secure their opinions, which could be done if all important resolutions were printed and spread abroad before a vote is taken here upon them¹. He concluded by stating that he considered the rabbinical conference an excellent institution, but that he could sanction its gatherings only if they would have in mind constantly the entire body of positive Judaism. He would therefore implore and adjure the assembly to declare its principles first of all and to permit no discussion whose only purpose was the expression of private opinions and views.

The President replied to Frankel and declared that they were quite at one in their views.

After this introductory digression the debate on the subject in hand proceeded, the main features of which are

¹ After his break with the Rabbinical Conference Frankel attempted to form a Conference of Theologians (*Theologenversammlung*) in accordance with these remarks; this conference of theologians was called for the fall of 1846 (October 21), but the meeting never took place.

reproduced here. Frankel opened the discussion proper by saying that the Hebrew language is interwoven with the very life of Judaism, and that for him it is the holy language. The Hebrew name of God, *Adonai*, means much more to the Jew than the German expression *Gott*. The retention of the Hebrew in prayer is necessary for the preservation of a knowledge of Holy Writ. Without this all true understanding of the Bible would be entirely neglected among the Jews.

Geiger asserted that all authorities agree that prayer may be spoken in any language. The question whether Hebrew is objectively necessary in prayer must be understood as meaning whether it is legally necessary. At all events, there is no prohibition anywhere to use other languages. This suffices¹.

Salomon claimed that not one of the recognized legal codes obliges us to pray in Hebrew. Mishnah and Talmud say distinctly שמוע בכל לשון and תפלה בכל לשון (the *sh'ma* and the eighteen benedictions may be spoken in any language); so also we read in the Schulchan Arukh אשר אשר יכל להתפלל בכל לשון אשר ירצה (*Or. Ch. Hil. Tef.* 101. 4), "man can pray in any language that he desires," and in the Book of the Pious (ספר חסידים, par. 588 and 785), it is said expressly that the chief prayers should be uttered in the language which is understood, and that it is better "not to pray at all than to pray in a language that one does not understand." Hence there is no legal obligation to pray in Hebrew².

A. Adler averred that the designation of Hebrew as the holy tongue is no evidence for the necessity of its use as the language of the divine service; this name indicates only that it is the language of Sacred Scripture, whose

¹ For Geiger's views on this subject see also "Der Hamburger Tempelstreit" in *Nachgelassene Schriften*, I, 151, 153, 156; "Nothwendigkeit und Maass einer Reform des jüdischen Gottesdienstes," in *ibid.*, 212-214; also *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, IX, 386, and *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben*, VI, 5-8.

² Salomon had expressed himself similarly in his pamphlet *Das Neue Gebetbuch und seine Verkürzung*, 20 ff., Hamburg, 1842.

sanctity depends not on the verbal expression but on the thought expressed. He objected to the distinction made by the commission as between the objective and the subjective necessity for the use of Hebrew in the service; this was of no importance; the vital question was whether the liturgy should be fixed for present needs or for always.

Reiss dissented from the report by claiming that the precept *אסור לשנות ממצב שטבעו חכמים בברכות* (it is forbidden to change the form into which the wise men have cast the benedictions)¹, involves a prohibition to eliminate Hebrew since the prayers and particularly the formulae of the benedictions can be reproduced exactly in no other language. Further, a distinction must be made between the private prayer of an individual and the public service in the synagogue; only in the former case is German permissible as the language of prayer.

Einhorn stated unequivocally that no possible doubt can be entertained as to the legal permissibility of any language for prayer. "Nay I go further and state that the introduction of the vernacular into the service is necessary. Hebrew is the language of the study of the Law, but it is not the organ wherewith to express the feelings of the people. Aforetimes prayer was only a cry of pain; a scarcely intelligible expression sufficed for this; but now people need a prayer that shall express thoughts, feelings, and sentiments; this is possible only through the mother tongue."

Samuel Adler agreed that the Maimonidean precept quoted by Reiss was of weight. But on what does this pronouncement rest? There is no reason given for it because it is axiomatic. The wise men in Israel worked for the people; set prayers were necessary in order that prayer might not become merely a matter of caprice; the people, being incapable of giving a worthy form of expression to prayer requires that prayer be cast into set formulae. Hence that

¹ Maimonides, *Hil. Berakhot*, I, 5; cf. Talmud Jer., *Berakhot*, V, 9^b; VI, 10^b, &c.

precept of Maimonides was meant for the people only, not for the teachers. It is reported of Jizchaq Saggi Nahor that he was dissatisfied with many of the benedictions; thus for example he substituted *נון כסה דוד ובונה ירושלים* for *בונה ירושלים*. All chakhamim (wise men, teachers) had the same privilege and the rabbis of the present day are subject to the same sacred duty of providing for the people according to the needs of the present.

Stein called attention to the fact that prayers like *Yequm Purqan* and *Qaddish* were spoken in Aramaic and not in Hebrew because the former was the popular tongue at the time they were introduced into the service.

Upon the taking of the vote on the question as to whether it is objectively legally necessary (*objektiv gesetzlich nothwendig*) to retain the Hebrew as the language of the service, all voted in the negative except four, who refrained from voting, viz. :—Frankel, Formstecher, Schott, and Philippon. On the following day three of these declared their position definitely; Frankel voted with the majority, and stated that there was no law demanding the use of the Hebrew, except in a few instances such as the priestly benediction; Schott, referring to the dictum of Maimonides that had been quoted during the discussion, voted that Hebrew was legally necessary; Philippon declared that he withdrew his objection, which referred only to the form in which the question was put, and voted also with those who answered in the negative; hence, all present, with the exception of Schott and Formstecher, placed themselves on record to the effect that they did not consider it either objectively or legally necessary to retain Hebrew as the language of the service.

But this was only the first portion of the question under debate; the conference proceeded to discuss the latter half, viz. : “is the retention of the Hebrew objectively necessary on other than legal grounds?”

Hirsch opened the discussion by stating that he considered the exclusion of Hebrew from the synagogue unwarranted;

true, Hebrew had become unfamiliar to the people, and this was one of those instances of a collision between life and profession, the reconciling of which was their especial task. They should aim to solve the question as to how Hebrew could be taught in the schools without encroaching too much upon the time necessary for proper instruction in other branches. The chief reason why Hebrew should not be excluded from the service was that in such case the gulf between the theologians, who alone would understand it, and the non-theologians would become wider and wider, and as a result the distinction between clergy and laity which is foreign to Judaism would creep in.

Holdheim claimed that a weakening of the religious spirit would not result from the removal of Hebrew from the synagogue, for this does not depend on any language but on its inherent strength. The use of the vernacular in the service wherever it was found necessary would contribute very much towards clarifying the religious conceptions, and, far from harming Judaism, would make for a strengthening of the religious consciousness among the Jews, and secure recognition of the mission of the religion in the outside world¹.

Herzfeld gave voice to the vague sentimentalism of the romanticist when he claimed that the Hebrew should be retained because there was something mystical in it; "even though some things be not clearly understood this does no harm."

Geiger held that it was desirable that the service be conducted in the mother-tongue because this is the language of the heart (*Gemüth*); "all our deepest feelings and sentiments, all our highest thoughts receive their expression through it." He felt constrained to confess that a German prayer aroused in him deeper devotion than did a Hebrew

¹ Holdheim expressed himself similarly in his response in the Geiger-Tiktin controversy; see *Rabbinische Gutachten über die Verträglichkeit der freien Forschung mit dem Rabbineramt*, 78-9; also *Geschichte der Berliner Reformgemeinde*, 16, 196-7.

prayer even though Hebrew was his second mother-tongue, nay, he might say his first, since he had learned it first. Hebrew lives no longer among the people; it is not difficult to perceive that even the reading from the Law wearies the greater portion of the congregation. It had been claimed, continued he, that if the Hebrew were to be eliminated from the service the very foundations of Judaism would be shattered; he, for his part, considered it a most serious reflection on Judaism if it be held that it required the prop of a language to endure; further, if the Hebrew is looked upon as an essential in Judaism, this would stamp the religion as a national religion since a peculiar language is the mark of an isolated national existence¹; and certainly no one present would assert that Judaism is necessarily dependent upon a separate nationality.

Frankel contended that religion as something abstract required outer symbols which remind us of God. This was the purpose of such commands as enjoined the use of תפילין, מזוזה, &c., &c.; this also is the purpose of Hebrew as the language of prayer. So much that is characteristic of Judaism has been surrendered already that it is time to call a halt. True, a portion of the service should be in German, but the Hebrew must be the preponderating element. The ancient teachers who had permitted the use of other languages in prayer had in mind only the ignorant who would not have found solace in a non-Hebrew prayer without such permission. These teachers never thought of eliminating Hebrew from the service.

Maier challenged the claim that the Hebrew was the Jews' mother-tongue; this has not been the case for centuries; it may edify some few, but the congregation

¹ In these days of Zionistic agitation this contention of Geiger is of especial interest; a similar view in regard to the Hebrew has been given expression to recently by Dr. Coblentz, rabbi in Bielefeld, in an article entitled "Zur Bekämpfung des unbewusst Nationalen im Gefühlsleben der deutschen Juden," *Populär-wissenschaftliche Monatsblätter zur Belehrung über das Judenthum für Gebildete aller Konfessionen*, XXV, 57-63, Frankfurt am Main, 1905; see also *Die Juden der Gegenwart*, 137, 267, Berlin, 1904.

does not entertain such a sentiment. This was recognized aforesaid so clearly that special books of devotion for women (תחנוּת) were composed in German; these aroused the women to greater devotion than did Hebrew the men. The only point that appears worthy of notice is the national significance of the language as a sign of the common bond among Jews; but a minimum of Hebrew is sufficient for this, e. g. the retention of שמע and קרישה, the priestly blessing and the reading from the Torah.

Philippson urged that all extremes be avoided; it is apparent from what has been said that no one desires to eliminate the Hebrew altogether, and that no one, on the other hand, objects to the introduction of German; it is only a question of how much. The German and Hebrew elements must be combined organically. The Hebrew is indispensable as the point of union among Jews. German Jews are German; they think and feel as Germans, and desire to live and be active patriotically. But Judaism is not German, it is universal; the dispersion of Jews is not the dispersion of Judaism. The confession of Judaism represents this in content, the Hebrew language in form¹.

Abraham Adler urged that they must bear in mind but one object, viz.: the search for truth; all sentimentalism is to be avoided. It may pain us to relinquish some things and yet it may have to be done if necessity demands. It has been claimed that Hebrew is sacred; not at all; the language which expresses sacred things is sacred; if I speak truth in German then the German word is sacred; if I lie in Hebrew, then the Hebrew word is unholy. Not the letter nor the sound makes the Bible holy, but the content. It is claimed further that the Bible will lose its influence if we dispense with Hebrew as the language of prayer. Not at all. Philo has been cited as the horrible example of the effect of the ignorance of Hebrew (in one place he

¹ Philippson elaborated his views on the subject in a series of leading articles in his *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, VIII, nos. 33, 43, 45, and 52.

mistranslates a Hebrew phrase rendering חקבר בשיבה טובה "thou shalt be supported" instead of "thou shalt be buried in a good old age"); but this is an unfortunate illustration; even though he knew the Bible from a Greek translation only, his works are more truly religious than many passages in the Talmud. . . . The eternal creations of the mind preserve a language; sacred scripture is immortal through itself and requires no props. Again, it has been asserted that the Hebrew supplies the mystical element to the service which is a necessity; I grant that there is truth in genuine mysticism, which is frequently the subtlest comprehension of the truth; but the unintelligible is not mysticism, and truth is not revealed in the irrational¹.

Auerbach injected a new element into the discussion; much has been said on the score of sentiment as an argument for retaining the Hebrew, he remarked: "but sentiment is an unsafe guide unless linked with principle." The chief factor in the pending discussion has not been mentioned, viz. the historical. The most important issue of the day in Judaism is involved here, i. e. the relation of the national to the religious element. If these are to be separated no one is justified in accusing us of surrendering our national position for the sake of civic advantages in the countries wherein we are living. Whoever would charge us with this would misunderstand the issue altogether; the issue is not what we wish to do to solve our mission, but what we must do. History has decided. Centuries lie between the national and the purely religious. Yet despite this the attachment to the Hebrew is not mere sentimentalism. The national was not really divorced from the religious in Judaism, but the latter is really

¹ Abraham Adler, the rabbi of Worms, was one of the keenest thinkers among the early reformers. He was a brother of Samuel Adler, rabbi of Alzey, later rabbi of Temple Emanuel, New York. With H. Wagner of Mannheim, Abraham Adler undertook, in 1846, the editing of a periodical in the interest of the rabbinical conferences entitled *Die Reform des Judenthums*. But one volume of this periodical appeared.

a development out of the former; the purely religious element is the flower of Jewish nationalism. We must hold fast the thread of this development if we would not surrender the principle of Judaism. Judaism is essentially history; the history of Judaism is at the same time religion. The Book of Books holds the balance between the national and the religious elements. The chief significance of this for us lies in the fact that Israel, whose name is found on every page of the Bible, still exists. Judaism is not merely a religious confession; it differs from other religions in the relation of Israel to the holy books. Therefore we must continue to foster an intimate knowledge of sacred scripture, and that, too, through the medium of the original tongue, whose higher significance for us must be acknowledged also in our time, and the study of which must be encouraged and furthered in our schools. As for Hebrew in the service, we must bear in mind always that we should have in the service a fixed and a variable portion; the Hebrew portion is the fixed element: this fixed part has not the devotional purpose in view, but forms the background for the service.

Einhorn began by confessing that he was not learned enough to surrender healthy common sense. The prime consideration is that the service should be understood, and therefore the mother-tongue is the only admissible language. Even though the theologians were the only ones to possess a knowledge of Hebrew, this would not constitute them into a hierarchy as had been argued; a hierarchy is founded upon privileges, not upon learning. Sentiment is praiseworthy, but not that sickly sentimentalism which lames, nay, kills all spiritual life. We cannot strike the rock of a dead language and expect the living waters to issue from it which will quench the thirst of the people.

Herxheimer asserted it to be nonsense to address God in a language one does not understand. The sermon in the vernacular became necessary because the דרשות (rabbinical homilies) had become unintelligible; likewise the German

prayer has become necessary because the Hebrew is no longer understood.

Stein pleaded for the retention of the Hebrew as a bond of union among Jews. "We are brethren, descendants of one father; argue against it as one will, the national element will never be entirely eliminated from Judaism; we are no longer a nation it is true, but a great religious community scattered all over the earth; the Hebrew then is the bond of union of the widely-scattered sections of our great family."

The vote on the question as to whether the retention of the Hebrew in the service was objectively necessary for other reasons than the legal, resulted in a division, thirteen voting in the affirmative and fifteen in the negative.

The third question was now broached, viz. whether it appeared advisable, i. e. subjectively necessary, to retain the Hebrew in part in the public service. This was not debated at length, and the vote showed that the members of the conference answered the question unanimously in the affirmative.

This point having been disposed of, the question arose as to how much Hebrew there should be in the service. The commission had reported that the following portions should be in Hebrew: ברכו with its responses; שמע to the close of the first section; the first three and the last three benedictions of the תפלה; and the reading from the Torah.

Maier, the chairman of the commission, impressed upon the conference that they must have in mind not the adherents of the Schulchan Arukh, nor the irreligious element who have turned their back on Judaism, but those who desire to pray to the God of their fathers in the spirit, and whom the traditional prayers no longer satisfy either in form or content. The best rule to follow is to return to the pristine simplicity of the ritual as recovered by the investigations of scholars (especially Zunz). Hence we should retain in Hebrew those sections which express most clearly our common faith, our common descent,

and our common hope. The portions designated by the commission do this. The remainder of the service should be in German.

The debate on this point elicited some interesting remarks on the Reading of the Law.

Wechsler expressed himself as opposed altogether to the commission on this point. The chief reason for the reading from the law was that the people learn its contents: the reading was not intended to be an exercise to show familiarity with the language nor yet a demonstration (Deut. xxxi. 11). But in our day the קריאת התורה (Reading of the Law) is not instructive; it has neither rhyme nor reason. The people do not understand it; if it be our desire to carry out the original object of the institution, viz. that the people learn the contents of the law, then it should be read in the language the people understand. Let such portions as cannot be read in German because of their content be read in Hebrew.

Herzfeld declared flatly that the Reading of the Law must be in Hebrew. "There is a mystical element in this that seems to me important." Were we to relinquish the קריאת התורה this would entail the entire removal of the ספרי תורה (Scrolls of the Law) from the synagogue, and such a proceeding would call forth a universal cry of horror.

Salomon suggested that the Torah be finished in a triennial cycle instead of annually. Following the hints in the Talmud that certain passages of the Bible were partly not read and partly not interpreted, we too may assume the right to omit such portions of the Pentateuch as no longer suit our time. The reading should be in Hebrew without translation, because the sermon is based on the portion read, and through the sermon the congregation learns the contents of the Torah section. Besides, the translation would lengthen the service needlessly.

Hirsch held that the Torah section should be read in Hebrew in abbreviated form, while Jolowicz argued that the reading should be in German, and proceeded to say

that no passage is objectionable to him who comes into the house of God with a pure heart.

Holdheim maintained that the Torah should be read in Hebrew. Our children must learn the Pentateuch in the original tongue. In addition to the Pentateuchal section, portions should be read from other books of the Bible in the vernacular for the benefit of the women¹.

The recommendations of the commission as to the Hebrew portions of the service were adopted by a vote of eighteen to twelve.

The Messianic Question. The Jewish State. The all-important question of the present attitude of Jewish thought on the Messianic hope occupied the attention of the conference in the discussion of the next point in the report of the commission. This involved such allied matters as the particularistic or the universalistic interpretation of Judaism, the return to Palestine, and the restoration of the ancient polity. The issue was clear between the reformers who interpreted the Messianic doctrine in its universal world-wide significance as the hope for the coming of the Messianic age and the traditionalists for whom it implied a personal Messiah and a restored Jewish state, as clear as it is at this day between political Zionism with its national programme, and reform Judaism with its universalistic outlook.

Before the debate opened, Geiger, who presided, called attention to the fact that the point at issue was not the

¹ The first public debate in this subject of reading from the Torah is very interesting in the light of what has taken place since. The question of reading from the Torah has been debated time and time again, and the religious leaders are still divided in opinion as was the case at Frankfort; this became apparent as recently as the year 1904 when the question was debated at the meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis at Louisville, Ky.; some desired a selection of passages for public reading, others advocated that everything in the Torah be read, some entered the lists for the triennial others for the annual cycle. It is to be noted that the reading from the scroll is universal except in two radical reform congregations in the United States, one of which has removed the ark and scroll altogether.

framing of a distinct doctrine on the Messianic question, but merely how existing prayers were to be judged, and if necessary changed in the light of present thought on the question. "Undoubtedly there was the widest divergence of opinion on the Messianic question, but it should be stated at the very outset that the loyalty to the state of even such as hold the traditional view on the Messiah in its strictest form is not to be questioned for a moment¹." The only object the conference had in view was to satisfy the demand that nothing be uttered in the prayers which contradicts present Jewish conviction.

The report of the commission read: "The Messianic idea is to occupy a prominent place in the liturgy also in the future, but all politico-national elements are to be eliminated."

Einhorn, who throughout his career was a true prophet of universalistic Judaism, gave clear expression to his thought when he said that the idea of the Messiah is most closely connected with the whole ceremonial law; after the disappearance of priest and sacrifice the Jew thought salvation possible only through the restoration of the state, the return of the people to Palestine, and the re-institution of the sacrifices; hence, so many lamentations over the destruction of the temple. Wonderful indeed was the conviction and the courage that could indulge such hope in spite of ghetto and persecution.

Now, however, our views have changed; formerly the people believed that God's protection rested particularly on the holy land and the holy people; they believed that he took pleasure in sacrifices, and that the priesthood was

¹ This point was constantly emphasized by Gabriel Riesser, the foremost champion of Jewish civil and political emancipation; he would not have religious reform required as a condition of citizenship. In this the great religious reformers agreed with him, but they contended none the less that reform and nationalism were mutually exclusive terms; cf. Holdheim's statement, "only by the absolute separation of the political and religious elements in Judaism is a thoroughgoing reform possible," *Autonomie der Rabbinen*, Preface, VII.

a necessary institution for the remission of sin. The prophets preached against this narrow view. The loss of political independence was bewailed formerly as a misfortune, but in reality this loss was really progress, and entailed not a cramping but an expansion of the religious spirit. Israel approached nearer the fulfilment of its mission. Devotion took the place of sacrifice. From Israel's midst God's word was to be carried to all portions of the earth. Only the Talmud moves in a circle; we, however, favour progress. "Formerly I looked upon the Messianic idea as a surrogate of the idea of immortality, but I do so no longer; I see in it the hope of both earthly and heavenly salvation. There is nothing objectionable in the idea. Also the belief in the election of Israel contains nothing that is repugnant: nay, we must retain it as the consciousness of an undeniable advantage, for it creates a beneficial self-consciousness over against the ruling church. I vote for the elimination of all petitions for the restoration of bloody sacrifices and political independence; on the other hand I wish that the Messianic prayers be framed in such a manner as to express the hope for the spiritual rebirth and the union of all men in faith and in love through the agency of Israel¹."

Hess asserted that the belief in a personal, i.e. a political Messiah, had disappeared from among German Jewry; it should therefore be eliminated from the liturgy, for we should not petition God for that in which we no longer believe.

Holdheim called attention to two points requiring correction. (1) It is held on the one hand that the hope for a political restoration is in conflict with the feelings of patriotism for the fatherland; while it is asserted on the other hand that these are not in conflict. (2) We have

¹ Einhorn embodied these views in his prayer book *עֲזֵר הַחַיִּים*. For a clear exposition of the principles by which he was guided in this work see his statement "Die neue Gebetsordnung der Hai Sinai-Gemeinde zu Baltimore," *Sinai*, I, 97-100, 127-139, Baltimore, 1856.

been warned not to accentuate the national element because of possible misinterpretation. As against this it has been correctly stated that we are not to pay any attention to misinterpretations. The petition for a return to Palestine to establish a political state for those who still suffer oppression is superfluous on the one hand, because both those who are oppressed, as well as the rest of us, would be helped only by the removal of oppression; hence, we should petition for this; on the other hand, it is inadmissible because it makes of the Messianic expectation not a religious but a purely material hope, which is cheerfully surrendered wherever the political status is satisfactory. But the Messianic hope truly understood is indeed religious. It expresses either the wish for redemption and liberation from spiritual evil, and the realization of the kingdom of God on earth, or for the political restoration of the Mosaic theocracy which alone makes it possible for the Jew to fulfil the whole Mosaic Law. This latter religious wish can be surrendered only by those who have a higher conception of Judaism, do not believe the fulfilment of its mission to be dependent on the existence of a Jewish state, and are convinced that the loss of the separate political existence of Jewry was necessary for the highest interests of Judaism and commanded by the religion. Only a clarified religious point of view can displace an obscure one. But those who consider a political restoration necessary in the interest of the religion may not surrender this, however prosperous they may be, since religion as they view it demands categorically the fulfilment of this expectation. The rigidly orthodox as well as the reformers stand on religious ground; the difference between them is that the former desire the restoration of the old political status in the interest of the religion, while the latter posit the closest adherence to the politico-national conditions of the present as the demand of religion¹.

¹ For an elaboration of Holdheim's views on this subject see his *Das*

Hirsch declared that the Messianic doctrine is the centre of Judaism. The perfectibility of mankind on this earth is the characteristic mark of Judaism whereby it is distinguished from all other religions. All the prophets agree in this. If they were able to picture the Messianic time only in terms of a happy Jewish state, this was due to their human limitations. The prophets revealed the future only to improve their own age; therefore, they did not stand above their age, and had to teach the truth in the terms of their age. In the Talmudic era, the time of oppression, the Messianic doctrine had to shape itself accordingly. Everywhere the Jewish doctrine of the Messiah is fulfilling itself rapidly. Everywhere the emancipation of mankind is being striven for so that a morally pure and holy life may be possible of being lived by man on this earth¹.

Salomon contrasted the heathen poets who sang of a golden age in dim antiquity with the Jewish prophets who proclaimed the golden age in the far future, the time of light, truth, harmony, and peace. This is the Biblical idea of redemption. . . . If we consider that the intelligent section of Jewry to-day repudiate the belief in a personal, political Messiah, that even a great number of the so-called "pious ones" restrict the belief in a personal Messiah to the prayers in the synagogue, while in their life there is not a trace of their acceptance of this belief, it is absolutely necessary, unless we would make a sport of religion, to frame the expression of the Messianic doctrine in such a manner as to make it purely spiritual, particularly as our ancient teachers were unanimous in the belief that

Religiöse und Politische im Judenthum, Schwerin, 1845; *Die Autonomie der Rabbinen*, 10, 20, Schwerin, 1843; he gave detailed expression to his ideas on the reform of the liturgy in a series of articles entitled "Ueber die Prinzipien eines dem gegenwärtigen Religionsbewusstsein entsprechenden Cultus" which appeared in the *Literaturblatt des Israelit des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1846, pp. 33, 42, 49, 53, 57, 61, 105, 109, 113, 117, 121, 125, 129, 133.

¹ Cf. his *Die Messiaslehre im Judenthum*, Leipzig, 1843.

our redemption would take place not through human agency, but would be accomplished by God himself.

Maier stated that the hope for a political restoration has been repudiated by the majority of the Jews in Germany, and if we do not wish that the attendants at our services should be guilty of mental reservations when the petition for the restoration of a Jewish state is uttered, we shall have to remove it from the liturgy, and give expression only to the universal and spiritual interpretation of the Messianic doctrine.

A. Adler criticized the statement frequently made to the effect that the monotheistic belief is the only thing that differentiates Judaism from other religions. This statement, he contended, confounds principle with content. Monotheism is indeed the principle of Judaism, but it does not constitute its chief content. There are other religionists who believe in the unity of God and still are not Jews. The belief in a future Messiah is peculiar to Judaism, and differentiates it from other religions more than does monotheism. This belief gives us the assurance:

1. That goodness, virtue, and holiness will issue as victors from the contest with evil, vice, and sin.
2. That the history of the world does not move in a circle, but will finally reach a goal, viz. the highest development of mankind.
3. That mankind is not doomed for ever to darkness, but will be reconciled with God in the end.

It contains implicitly the belief in the ideal resurrection of the nations, and assures therewith the immortality of individual man. We will prove our true religiosity when, instead of declaring what the Messianic belief is not, we will state how it is to be conceived in its very truth. By negating we merely take away, and contribute nothing; by positing we contribute something important, and take away nothing. Therefore we must substitute in our prayers the true idea of the Messiah for the personal representation, and give this adequate expression.

Auerbach held that the Messianic idea is the soul of positive Judaism, and its development lies in the transformation of the national into the purely religious. In the Talmud the national ideals are uppermost; the whole Talmudic system was in opposition to such individual utterances as expressed other interpretations of the Messianic idea. At that time the national expectation could not be surrendered. In our days, however, the ideals of justice and the brotherhood of men, have been so strengthened through the laws and institutions of modern states that they can never again be shattered; we are witnessing an ever nearer approach of the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth through the strivings of mankind.

Herzfeld exclaimed, whatever is false must be excised. No empty phrases! Everything must be clear and definite. The conference must declare what it means by redemption; yes, it should state that we are now entering upon the period of redemption. Freedom and virtue are spreading, the world is growing better.

Treuenfels set forth that the emancipation of the Jews in various lands does not clash with the belief in the political restitution of the Jewish state, as may be proved by the example of Poland. The national feature cannot be explained away so long as physical descent constitutes the Jew; *natio* is derived from *nasci*; just as little can the political element be eliminated from the Messianic idea, since the Messianic era even in its spiritual sense involves the complete transformation of the political conditions of the world.

Herxheimer emphasized the thoughts that the Messianic idea seems to express discontent with present conditions, trust in the goodness of Providence, and hope for a happier future. In times of misfortune the people recalled the better past, and associated this with David and his time. The best course to pursue in this matter is to retain all general expressions of these hopes, and to eliminate every utterance which was called forth by the oppressions of the Middle Ages.

Wagner claimed that the Messianic belief is a fundamental doctrine of Judaism, and as old as this itself. It must have always a prominent place in the liturgy because it is a characteristic mark of Judaism, includes definitely the idea of the election of Israel, and voices our hope that the fundamental truths of Judaism may become the common possession of all peoples. Let the rebuilding of Jerusalem and Zion be mentioned in our prayers as a tribute of piety to the holy city and the seat of holiness. The petitions for a return to Palestine and the restoration of the sacrificial *culte* must be stricken out.

Kahn averred that the Bible does not require us to believe in a personal Messiah. The prophets are not soothsayers, but truthsayers (nicht Wahrsager sondern Weissager). Not all of them prophecy the coming of a personal Messiah, but all agree in picturing an ideal Messianic era. So do we also expect the coming of a Messianic era, but not of a personal Messiah with accompanying political changes. The prayer *אתה בחרתני* (expressing the doctrine of the election of Israel) may be retained as historically significant, but not such passages as emphasize a still existing difference between Israel and other nations (*המבריל בין ישראל לעמים*).

Stein, in opposition to most of the members, pleaded for the retention of the prayers for the coming of the personal Messiah. Although our hopes are for the coming of the Messianic era of peace and good-will, still we may surely leave to God the manner of the fulfilment; all great events in the world's history have been accomplished by great personalities; may we not, then, confidently expect that this greatest and highest consummation of all, the ushering in of religious harmony, peace, and brotherhood will be accomplished through one sent of God¹?

¹ Stein changed his position on this subject radically during ensuing years. In his book *Die Schrift des Lebens*, published in 1872, he repudiated the belief in a personal Messiah. The people Israel is the Messiah, pp. 319-36, notably 320 and 336.

He also pleaded for the retention of the prayers for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, and continued¹: The followers of all the religions founded upon the Bible look to Jerusalem as the holy city, and I believe that when the kingdom of God shall be established on earth, and all men be united in the belief in the One God and in brotherly love, the holy city will arise from its desolation, and a magnificent temple where all peoples will worship together will be built there as the visible symbol of that spiritual brotherhood and union.

On the other hand, the petition for a return to Palestine must be excised, for this does not come from our hearts, and is therefore untrue. We know but one fatherland, that in which we live; we cannot pray "Mayst thou take us back in joy to *our* land"—as though our present home were strange to us, and our true home lay a thousand miles distant. There is another reason for this. Our fathers, oppressed and trampled to the earth, had to consider the dispersion as a curse perforce, and therefore they prayed *ומפני חטאינו גלינו מארצנו* "Because of our sins we were exiled from our land." Quite a contrary conception is ours. We have begun to recognize that the dispersion was a blessing, that God has scattered us over the earth as "the seed of truth," so that there might be worshippers of the one only and true God everywhere (Isa. lxi. 9; Zech. viii. 13, 23).

Formstecher remarked that scientific theology must recognize the Messianic idea as the red thread which runs through all the stadia in the development of Judaism; but where lies the necessity of incorporating a formulated Messianic doctrine into the liturgy? We have the Messianic doctrine in the Bible. Any concrete form into which we would cast it would constitute it a dogma, and Judaism desires no dogmas. Therefore this whole Messianic matter should be excluded from the liturgy, and its place be taken by readings from the prophets on the subject, to be supplemented by the sermon.

¹ For his change of view on this subject also see *Die Schrift des Lebens*, 318.

Philippson said epigrammatically that revelation is the foundation, and the Messianic idea the roof of Judaism. Judaism, however, includes no political striving for a kingdom of its own, even though the term nation must be retained because of the fact of descent. All political features must be discarded.

The resolution on this subject as adopted finally by the majority reads: "The Messianic idea should receive prominent mention in the prayers, but all petitions for our return to the land of our fathers, and for the restoration of a Jewish state, should be eliminated from the prayers."

The Mussaf Prayer for the Restoration of the Sacrifices. The whole commission agreed on reporting that a repetition of the תפלה (the eighteen benedictions) was unnecessary, and the majority of the commission held that the whole *Mussaf* service was inadmissible because the sacrificial *culte* was outgrown, and no longer expressed the religious *status quo*.

This report also called forth a lengthy debate, a few expressions from which follow:

Salomon: With our conception of the Messianic idea the *Mussaf*, which is primarily a petition for the sacrifices, is a *contradictio in adjecto*.

Formstecher: Basing as we do on the positive historical standpoint, we should mention the sacrifices in our prayers as a historical reminiscence, not in the way of petition for their re-institution, but in the way of thanks that we have substituted prayer for sacrifice in accordance with the utterances of the prophets.

Holdheim: According to the legal interpretation of Judaism sacrifice is expiation; repentance alone does not bring forgiveness—altar and priest are necessary. This idea was combated by the prophets, but it persisted among the people, and the Talmud adheres to this external justification; therefore prayer is conceived in it as only taking the place of sacrifice in the interim until this shall be restored. We, however, occupy an altogether

different position in this matter, and cannot possibly petition for the sacrificial *culte*. However, the entire elimination of the *Mussaf* service would meet with general disapprobation. Let us retain the form, but substitute for the traditional prayers such others as express our religious standpoint in the matter.

The vote on the question—"Shall the petitions for the restoration of the sacrificial *culte* be removed from the prayers?"—was unanimous in the affirmative.

"Shall the sections of the Torah which command the offering of sacrifices continue to be read?" Majority in the affirmative if the text be read in Hebrew.

"Shall reminiscences of the sacrifices find a place in the liturgy?" Majority in the affirmative.

Cycle of Torah Readings. The commission recommended the triennial cycle, and the abolition of the *Aufrufen*; the referee Maier, however, declared for the retention of *Aufrufen*.

The triennial cycle received all the votes but five.

All voted for the translation of the Pentateuchal section in order to make the people again familiar with the Torah, as had been the purpose of the Targum of old; the only difference of opinion arose from the consideration of the best manner of carrying this out; many felt that this translation or explanation should take place only when there was no sermon.

The decision in favour of the triennial cycle brought up the question of the celebration of שמחת תורה (the Feast of Rejoicing in the Law). Should this feast be celebrated annually or triennially, and should the pentateuchal sections ואת הברכה and בראשית be read annually or triennially?

During the debate on these questions, Maier contended that שמחת תורה is only the second day of שמיני עצרת; therefore he was opposed to the annual reading of ואת הברכה.

Philippson expressed himself similarly because we have in שבועות a feast of rejoicing in the Law. Holdheim asserted that the significance of the holiday as שמחת תורה is of late

origin. In the original prayers for the Feast of Tabernacles no mention is made of it; it is thus designated only in the Piyutim. The vote showed the majority to be in favour of the triennial celebration of the holiday.

Aufrufen (*Calling to the Law*). The commission, with the exception of Maier, reported in favour of its abolition.

Gosen, one of the ultra conservatives, made the surprising statement that he wished the *Aufrufen* retained, because the Jew looks upon it as a kind of confession of faith, as a personal acceptance of the Law, almost as the Christian does the Eucharist.

Holdheim called the correctness of this statement into question,—But, said he, if this is the case it is a reprehensible error for the removal of which it were desirable to so arrange the Torah reading that the people would consider it an exercise for instruction; but it may never become the occasion of introducing a sacrament into Judaism which has no sacraments in the Christian interpretation of the term. Therefore he favoured the abolition of *Aufrufen*, if for no other reason than to prevent the error that the Jew considers it equivalent to a confession of faith.

A. Adler favoured its abolition because the *Aufrufen* accentuates the distinction between the sexes in religious functions, men alone being called to the Torah, while we must insist upon equality of men and women in religious functions. Further, the whole congregation would take more interest in the reading were there no *Aufrufen*, since many look upon the reading as especially for those who are called.

In spite of these spirited expressions the great majority voted for the retention of the *Aufrufen*, but against the repetition of the מפתיר.

*The Organ*¹. The question, Is the organ permitted in

¹ It is rather remarkable that this question should have occasioned no debate at the first public gathering in which it was broached. There has been no modern synagogal reform which has called forth more heated controversy than this of introducing the organ into the house of worship.

synagogue? was decided in the affirmative by a unanimous vote without debate.

A further question was "May and should the organ be played by a Jew on the Sabbath?" This occasioned a debate whereof a few expressions follow:—

Löwengard: Yes. The expression *אין שבות במקדש* (rabbinical legislation for the sabbath is not considered binding in the performance of any service in the temple) must be applied also to the synagogue, since we no longer pray for the restoration of the Temple of Jerusalem.

Einhorn: If the Talmudists make a distinction between temple and synagogue, the reason is that they consider the offering of sacrifices necessary for full divine service. We, however, consider the abolition of sacrifice as a step in advance, and therefore *אין שבות במקדש* is also applicable to the synagogue.

Holdheim: We have almost unanimously resolved to Time and again it has been a bone of contention in congregations, and still to-day ranges Jews on opposite sides. The first official expression we have on the question is the report of the committee submitted to this conference (*Protokolle*, 326–34), although there were individual expressions on this subject in the collections of opinions called forth by the reforms in the Hamburg temple in 1818, one of which was the introduction of the organ. The committee's report at the Frankfort conference marshalled reasons in favour of the playing of the instrument; sixty years later (1905), the question is still a living issue in Germany; the Cologne congregation was almost disrupted because of the resolution to introduce the organ; in Berlin the entire rabbinate in 1904 issued an opinion that the innovation was not against the practice of Judaism. (*Das Gutachten des Berliner Rabbinats über die Orgel*, *A. Z. d. J.*, LXVIII (1904), 65; see also *ibid.*, 121, 349.) The celebrated Jewish scholar A. Berliner in that same year took stand against the introduction of the organ: see his pamphlet "Zur Lehr und zur Wehr"; cf. also Geiger *J. Z. W. L.*, I, 89–98; Philippson, *A. Z. d. J.*, XXV, 1861, no. 48. Wiener, Wechsler, Adler, Kahn, Low, Aub (all favourable), Landau (opposed), *ibid.* In Germany many conservative congregations have organs in their synagogues; in France it is universal: see programme of central consistory of May, 1846, which ordered organs to be placed in the synagogues *A. Z. d. J.*, X, 346; in England only the three so-called reform synagogues have the organ, though at marriages the organ is used in orthodox synagogues; in the United States it is general excepting in ultra orthodox houses of worship.

eliminate from our prayers the petition for the return to Jerusalem and the re-institution of the sacrificial service, and have declared clearly thereby that our houses of worship are on an equal footing with the Temple of Jerusalem, that our service, with its devotional inwardness, is of a higher character than the sacrificial service, displaces it for the whole future, and makes it dispensable. If, then, the sacrificial service in itself involved no desecration of the Sabbath, if the instrumental music accompanying it gave it a higher consecration, why should this be less the case with our service that is of a loftier character according to our conviction?

The question was decided unanimously in the affirmative. This closed the consideration of the report of the commission on the liturgy.

Circumcision. A communication was addressed by Dr. Fr. Th. Baltz to the conference on the subject of circumcision: he wrote that circumcision has evil results, giving rise to sexual diseases and sometimes to impotence; he proposed that if it cannot be abolished altogether it should be performed in such a manner as to preclude danger and evil results. The conference answered by stating that it recognized gratefully the good intentions of the writer; as for the supposed evil results of circumcision that he mentions, it must be said that there are other medical authorities who claim just the opposite; Jewish marriages are very fruitful, as is well known. At any rate, the matter is of the highest importance, and for that very reason is not ripe for consideration. As for the manner of performing the operation, most of the German governments had passed laws on the subject and put it under the supervision of the medicinal police. The conference would undoubtedly consider the subject at some future time, and would then take note of the communication of the writer.

The Status of Woman. During the debates on the report of the commission on liturgy, the necessity of declaring the equality of woman with man in the per-

formance of public religious functions was mentioned by several speakers. One of the marked achievements of the reform movement has been the change in the religious status of woman. According to the Talmud and the rabbinical codes, woman can take no part in public religious functions; the question was brought formally before the conference by Samuel Adler in a resolution which, after reciting the traditional view, goes on to say that the conference declares that "she has the same obligation as man to participate from youth up in the instruction in Judaism and in the public services, and that the custom not to include women in the number of individuals necessary for the conducting of a public service is only a custom, and has no religious basis."

The subject was not debated at length, and was referred to a commission consisting of S. Adler, Einhorn, and A. Adler for report at the next conference.

The Sabbath Question. A commission consisting of Geiger, A. Adler, Wechsler, S. Adler, and Kahn had been appointed at the Brunswick conference on the motion of Hirsch to report on the question "if there were any means, and if so, what, to reconcile Jewish doctrine and the demands of modern life in reference to the Sabbath¹." President Stein suggested that owing to lack of time the consideration of the report of the commission be postponed until the next conference. Since the whole report was constructed upon one leading idea as its basis, said he, it would not be fair to dismember the report by taking up some points and neglecting others. The report should be considered as a whole. He suggested that the report be printed and distributed to the members of the conference, who would then have time to study it, and come prepared for a full and free discussion next year. However, he did not wish to dictate to the conference, and he would put the question whether the members wished to go into a consideration of the whole report? This was negatived.

¹ J. Q. R., XVII, 677.

The question was then put whether special points in the report should be taken up.

Geiger, the chairman of the commission, desired special points in the report to be discussed: they are of such importance and are so constantly brought to the attention of all rabbis that they must have been thought upon earnestly by all, and therefore all must be ready to discuss them. The difficulties presented by the question of Sabbath observance are among the most serious confronting us. It is not a question of theory, but of practice. The demands of life require action on our part. Even though we may not all agree on principles, still we may be able to agree on results.

However, the conference decided to postpone the consideration of the separate points also till the next conference, when the Sabbath question was to be the first subject to be taken up. It was also decided to print the report of the commission.

The commission was directed to consider also all questions connected with the observance of the holidays and fast days, and incorporate this in their report.

Revision of Marriage Laws. Time not permitting the extended consideration necessary for so important a subject the Commission on the Revision of the Marriage Laws appointed at the Brunswick Conference was ordered to publish their report, which would be taken up at the next conference.

Jewish Theological Faculty. Philippson offered the following resolution: "The rabbinical conference declares that it considers the foundation of one or more Jewish theological faculties in Germany a worthy and high endeavour, and that it will co-operate earnestly with such work.

Resolved, that a commission be appointed, whose aim it shall be to interest the public in this noble cause and to work for its consummation in connexion with representative and discerning men in all walks of life." The commission named consisted of Geiger, Philippson, Stein, Holdheim, and Salomon.

Name. The President suggested the advisability of changing the name of the conference from "Conference of the Rabbis of Germany" to "German Rabbinical Conference." The former name, said he, confines the conference within too narrow bounds, since it excludes all foreigners. There is no German Judaism. Judaism is universal. Thus he knew of a Hungarian and a French rabbi who wished to attend. The majority agreed with him, and it was resolved to call the society "The Conference of German Rabbis."

It was resolved to issue an address to the congregations summarizing the work of the conference. This was referred to the Editorial Commission, which consisted of the President, Stein, Jost, Auerbach and Formstecher.

A commission consisting of Philippson, Stein and Formstecher was appointed to prepare a manual for domestic devotion.

A commission for further consideration of the prayer-book was named, viz.: Stein, Salomon, Geiger, Maier, Herzfeld.

The election of the Executive Committee for the next conference resulted in the choice of Geiger, Philippson, Holdheim and Herxheimer.

Addresses to the Conference.

One of the most striking features of the Frankfort Conference is the evidence that has been preserved of the keen interest it aroused in all portions of Germany. Numerous congregations and societies sent addresses of confidence and sympathy; these addresses came from Bingen, Darmstadt, Alzey, Alsfeld, Mayence, Ekenkoben, Frankenthal, Grünstadt, Musbach in the Palatinate, Breslau, Mannheim, Obermoshel, Schwitzingen, Neustadt in Upper Silesia, Münster, Worms, Giessen, and Frankfort on the Main.

The most significant of these addresses were the memorial from the recently formed Reform Association of Berlin, and

the address signed by 168 Jews of Breslau. These ought not to be dismissed with a mere mention. The Berlin society, in its famous *Aufruf*, had declared for the convening of a synod that was to be the authoritative Jewish body, and was to decide upon moot questions. When the necessity of instituting a public service became plain, the question arose whether steps towards this should be taken before or after calling the synod. The "synodists" held that no prayer-book could be written unless there was a definite declaration of faith whereon it would be based, and hence, the synod must be convened first to formulate this creed; however, the need for a service was so great that steps were taken to institute it at once. Yet the sentiment for the endorsement of an authorized gathering was so strong that it was determined to send a deputation to the rabbinical conference, which, though not of a definite authoritative nature, had something of this character; to enter into relationship with the conference partook of the nature of listening to authoritative voices without sacrificing autonomy. The object of the address to the conference was to pave the way for the synod; the Berlin congregation represented the laity, the conference the rabbinate, the two component parts of the future synod. Dr. S. Stern, the most prominent member of the Berlin congregation, had said in urging the address to the conference: "If we recognize the necessity of the co-operation of both elements for reform in Judaism and desire that both join in the future synod, a preliminary agreement must take place now¹."

It was decided to send a deputation consisting of Stern, Rebenstein, and Simion, who were to read the address to the conference, but this was to be understood to be merely an act of courtesy, and nothing more.

At the first session of the conference this deputation

¹ Proceedings of the Berlin Congregation of June 18, 1845, quoted by Holdheim, *Geschichte der Entstehung und Entwicklung der jüdischen Reformgemeinde in Berlin*, 133.

appeared and presented the memorial from the congregation. This memorial is of importance because it marks the first public activity of the Berlin society since its definite organization two months previously in the month of May. The memorialists set forth the purpose of their society thus: "We have undertaken the great task of breaking through the standstill which has barred the development of Judaism for centuries, and has required of us the unchanged retention of forms which conflicted more and more with our thoughts and sentiments, and with the needs of our advanced life. We have united for the carrying out of the following purpose: to redeem Judaism, our most precious heritage, from all antiquated forms, not only for the benefit of ourselves or of special classes, but of all its confessors, and to preserve its eternal truth in and through a form suited to our age, in order that it may once again permeate our life with the power of its divine essence. We have not failed to recognize the difficulty of this great purpose, but that which forces and necessitates us to awaken ourselves and our co-religionists out of the state of comfortable ease, and to enter upon the severe struggle with indifference on the one hand and millenium-old prejudice on the other, is the consciousness that we should publicly confess that which we have recognized as the true and the right, and that not only for our own sake, but in the name of Judaism we must make possible for it that development which has been denied to it for so long a time. We are encouraged to undertake this difficult task because we are convinced that the old vital force has not died out of, nor been weakened in, Judaism, and that the need we feel is not an isolated phenomenon, but will come to the fore with equal force among thousands of our cultured and advanced coreligionists as soon as the initiative is taken. But we are encouraged most of all by our faith in the progressive consciousness of the age—which urges us on to freedom of thought, and lends the strongest support to all efforts which are directed towards bringing

pristine and pure truth to light even though this has been obscured by dense fogs for thousands of years."

The memorial lays stress upon the necessity for rabbis and laymen to work together in the cause; theirs is a lay movement, it has gone forth from the people; the conference is a rabbinical movement; neither alone is representative, however; people and rabbis must join to form an authoritative body, viz. a synod.

The memorial concludes by expressing the hope that the conference will give expression to its official recognition of the work and purpose of the Reform Association, which aims not at the destruction of Judaism, but its strengthening and preservation.

The conference answered by declaring that its members recognized that the Reform Association owed its existence to the religious need to reconcile modern life with Judaism, and that it was gratifying to know that this conviction of the need of reform in Judaism was felt in the congregations as well as by the rabbis. Gladly would they work hand in hand with the Reform Association if the latter were guided by the same principles as were considered necessary by the conference for true reform in Judaism. They would watch with interest the steps taken by the Reform Association toward the formation of a synod.

The address issued to the conference from Breslau contained a strong presentation of the religious state of many Jews, and of the confusions arising from the conflicts between the demands of life and the observance of the traditional laws; particular attention was called to the need of a reform of the liturgy and to the necessity of a solution of the difficulties connected with Sabbath observance. "The great majority of the Jews, even those who pose as the zealous watchmen of orthodoxy, have really no holidays. The children attend school on the Sabbath, the apprentice must work on this day as on every other at his trade or in business, and when the young man has finally become his own master, he will scarcely be inclined to observe a day

which he has not been accustomed to observe from childhood, even though able to do so; but how few are there in our time who can observe this day without great danger of ruin?"

Attention was called also to the need of a reform of the dietary laws. The writers proceeded to say that they had called the attention of the conference to these things because they felt that the leaders of the people should know the state of affairs among the people; it were cowardice to conceal it, and they hoped that the rabbis would deal courageously with these pressing questions of the time, and find the means of so interpreting Judaism as to enable the Jew to live fully and freely the life in the world without becoming false or untrue to his faith.

The conference answered by saying that it appreciated the service rendered by the writers of the address in stating thus clearly the conflicts between official Judaism and practical life; but the conference must move slowly, and could not solve all the great questions of the time in a trice. This conference had taken up the liturgy and considered it thoroughly; future conferences would undoubtedly give earnest attention to the other great questions which the writers touched.

There is apparent in the answers of the conference to the various addresses the same broad spirit and wise counsel as characterized the discussions and deliberations. The men who participated in this conference were imbued thoroughly with the serious responsibility of the Jewish religious leaders in that era of upheaval. With but two or three exceptions they were not drastic in their suggestions and methods, but desirous of reforming gradually. The discussions evince a full knowledge of the past development of Judaism, and a thorough grasp of present conditions. Opinions differed, it is true, as to the length that the reforms should go, but the spirit that ruled the conference was that reform must proceed along the lines of past endeavour; for every reform that was suggested some warrant was sought

from Talmudic authority. The sensational withdrawal of Zacharias Frankel from the conference after the third day's session was absolutely inexcusable, therefore, even from his standpoint. Frankel's action was the focus of the opposition to this conference, as the protest of the 116 rabbis had been to the Brunswick conference. As stated above, Frankel had criticized the Brunswick conference very sharply and severely, and therefore his appearance at the Frankfort conference was gladly welcomed, for he had been the only rabbi of note with reform leanings who had denounced so unsparingly the first conference. At the very outset he had taken pains to define his position as being that of adherence to positive historical Judaism; this phrase was grasped at eagerly by the opponents of the reformers, as the club wherewith to belabour them, notably later by the Breslau school; but as Stein, the president of the conference, said in his reply to Frankel's opening speech, this phrase defined exactly the reform position; the reformers too built on positive historical Judaism; it was not their purpose to break with the Judaism of the past, but to develop it further. Frankel, however, as it appears, desired to be recognized as the ruling spirit of the conference; and when he found this position denied him, for there were others his equals in learning and prestige, he withdrew, giving as his excuse that the conference should not have voted that it was "advisable" (*rathsam*) to retain the Hebrew in the service, but absolutely essential. This resolution had been passed on the afternoon of July 17, which was the last meeting that Frankel attended; in the issue of the *Oberpostamtszeitung* of July 18, he published a statement explanatory of his withdrawal from the conference¹. At the morning session of July 20 the president called the official attention of the

¹ This was republished in *A. Z. d. J.*, IX (1845), 174-6, and in the *Israelit des 19. Jahrhunderts*, VI (1845), 256; also in the proceedings of the conference, *Protokolle und Aktenstücke d. zweiten R. V.*, 86, Frankfurt am Main, 1845.

conference to this article of Frankel's, and read also an answer¹ which had been written, and which he submitted for the approval of the members. After citing the resolution of the conference, that the retention of the Hebrew was only advisable, and interpreting this action of the conference to mean that it was the duty of the rabbis to abolish it gradually, Frankel goes on to say: "I dissent from such a resolution, not only because of a difference of view, but also because of a difference of tendency. This spirit, which leaves unnoticed so many weighty elements, and supplants that which is of weight and power in every confession, viz. the historical element, makes in my opinion not for the preservation but the destruction of positive historical Judaism, which I had explained clearly to the conference as representing my position. This spirit must invalidate the future resolutions of the conference for all such as stand on the platform of positive historical Judaism, because, as I explained also to the conference, it depends not only on the taking of the vote, but on the motive for voting, and only he who has come to a decision himself, and seeks only a formal endorsement, can find an apparent comfort in a general vote."

For this reason he must not only protest against the resolution in question, but feels it necessary to declare that his standpoint is altogether different from that of the conference; he regrets that the conference, instead of keeping in mind the high aim of securing "universal confidence, and thus bring about a compromise between opposing elements," had again by this act alienated thousands. He had come to the conference with the purpose of reaching an understanding with opposing opinions, and with the hope of making the conference the reconciling influence, and establishing it as the representative Jewish body; but this action of the conference had demonstrated to him the vanity of this hope, and therefore he felt

¹ Published originally in *Frankfurter Journal*; also in *Protokolle*, 90.

compelled to withdraw, no matter though his action be misinterpreted.

The conference answered this declaration by calling attention to the fact that the vote on the resolution in question showed that thirteen held the same views as Frankel, while the majority vote was only fifteen, and three had abstained from voting; hence Frankel stood by no means alone, and if he was sincere in his declaration it was surely his duty to continue in the conference. "The conference resents the implication that by this majority vote it abandoned the standpoint of positive historical Judaism which it had declared with loud acclaim the day before to be its standpoint no less than it was that of Dr. Frankel." The vote on the advisability of the retention of the Hebrew was concerned with the question of opinions, not of tendencies. The positive historical standpoint demands development out of present conditions, not a haphazard creation without definite pre-existing material; and thus our prayers should attach themselves to the existing liturgy, and be developed in form and content wherever possible from that which we have received from the past. The conference can grant as little that prayer in a non-Hebrew language implies a denial of the historical element as Dr. Frankel on his part will admit that the Talmudists attacked positive historical Judaism when they permitted the holiest of our prayers to be uttered in Aramaic—yes, when they allowed the whole service, with the exception of a few passages, to be performed in a non-Hebrew language; Dr. Frankel admitted this when he voted that there was no legal necessity for the employment of Hebrew as the language of prayer. The conference believe, therefore, that Dr. Frankel, by making this issue, which can be construed only as violently tendential, the cause of his breaking with the conference, has abandoned not so much the conference as himself, and the consequences of his own position.

Some members of the conference desired a clause to be

inserted to the effect that Frankel mistook the tendency of the conference, while Geiger held that the only way to meet such arrogance was to pass it by in silence; he begged the conference to avoid all polemical utterances against Frankel, who, being absent, was unable to defend himself.

Frankel answered this reply of the conference in a letter dated Mayence, July 22¹; he reiterated his former statements, but did not succeed in defending his position strongly.

To offset in all likelihood the two addresses of commendation sent to the conference from Breslau, the one by the officials of the congregation², and the other by 168 private individuals, sympathizers with Frankel sent him an address applauding his action; Graetz, later the historian of the Jews, but at that time a rabbinical candidate, was particularly active in the matter³; this demonstration on the part of the orthodox element in Breslau was inspired by opposition to Geiger. The orthodox party of Stettin and Frankfort also memorialized Frankel for his stand in the matter⁴.

L. Schott, rabbi of Randegg, followed the lead of Frankel and withdrew from the conference. Frankel became from now on the recognized leader of the conservatives, whose motto was *saue qui peut*; not principle but accommodation guided this party; the Breslau rabbinical seminary founded in 1855, of which Frankel became the head, supplied the leaders for this party, which succeeded eventually in stifling the reform movement in Germany⁵.

¹ Republished *Israelit des 19. Jahrhunderts*, VI (1845), 320.

² *Protokolle*, 235.

³ *A. Z. d. J.*, IX (1845), 595.

⁴ *A. Z. d. J.*, IX (1845), 624; *Israelit des 19. Jahrhunderts*, VI, 331, 339. See, however, Philippon's explanation of the incident, *A. Z. d. J.*, IX, 519. See also A. Adler, "Beleuchtung der Gegenerklärung des Herrn Ober-rabbiners Dr. Z. Frankel," in No. 203 der "Frankfurter Oberpostamt-zeitung," *Israelit*, VI (1845), 313, 321.

⁵ The bitterest denunciations and criticisms of the Frankfort conference appeared in the columns of the *Orient*; as an example it suffices to refer to the *נר* or *Dirge* in Hebrew by an anonymous poet wherein the rabbis

The Frankfort conference will always be notable in the annals of Reform Judaism for the remarkable discussions on the liturgy. The intent and purpose of reform were grasped firmly by the leaders assembled there, and the universal elements in Judaism received expression in lofty strains time and again; the members of the conference did not attempt the impossible; they had practical problems to solve, and did so with the needs of their generation constantly in view¹; they were thoroughly awake to the situation, and were justified in hoping that, as the president stated in his closing remarks, "a new era of active participation in our ancestral faith here and elsewhere would date from the second rabbinical conference held at Frankfort²."

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assembled at Frankfort are called "destroyers and ruiners." As a further instance of the intensity of feeling aroused in the opposition by these conferences, the words of the editor of the English publication *The Voice of Jacob*, IV, 219, written after the adjournment of the Frankfort conference, may be cited: "Had but a small section of the 116 rabbis who subscribed the Manifesto or protest (against the Brunswick conference) condescended to assemble, out-reason and out-vote the 23 rabbis whose dicta they had at last occasion so solemnly to repudiate, there might have been less of heresy at this day raging among the people. That Manifesto has no doubt served as a standard round which to rally the faithful, together with those predisposed to condemn the heterodox party; but it may reasonably be doubted whether its dry denunciations have convinced one man of his errors or recovered one stray sheep to the fold. The right is with us; the truth is ours; and we thank God at last to see a growing disposition on the part of our proper leaders to rouse themselves from their lethargy, to buckle on their armour, and to do battle in a holy cause in which victory is assured."

¹ Geiger, "Vorträge über die Verhandlungen der Rabbinerversammlung," *Israelit des 19. Jahrhunderts*, VI, 345-7.

² The effect of this conference in awakening interest in Judaism among the indifferent was felt throughout Germany, *A. Z. d. J.*, X, 25.